

July 27, 2006

Skagit County Canvassing Board
P.O. Box 1306
Mt. Vernon, WA 98273

Dear Canvassing Board Members:

In accordance with RCW 29A.04.570, the State Election Certification and Training Program conducted a comprehensive review of election procedures in Skagit County during the 2005 General Election.

The RCW also requires a follow-up visit prior to the next Primary or General Election to verify the County has taken the steps necessary to correct the changes recommended in the review report.

The following are the conclusions made by the reviewer during the follow-up visit.

1. *The reviewer recommended the election staff change their voter registration procedures and register voters if the voter provided the four pieces of required information in the RCW. They were not registering voters if they did not provide a driver's license number or the last four digits of their social security number.*

The election staff immediately changed their procedures so that they would register a voter if the voter provided the four pieces of required information. They then changed their procedures again effective January 2006, when new legislation went into effect. They now require all six pieces of required information, including the driver's license or last four digits of the voter's social security number before they process a new voter registration.

2. *The reviewer recommended the Skagit County Election Department change the questionnaire to the cities, towns and taxing districts to request a confirmation of the annual salary. They asked the district to confirm the filing fee for the position and the law requires they ask the district to confirm the annual salary.*

The election staff changed the questionnaire to comply with the law.

3. *The reviewer recommended Skagit County Election Department adopt a procedure that will prevent them from mistakenly accepting a write-in declaration of candidacy for a position when the election had lapsed because no one filed for office.*

Before the 2007 election cycle, when elections may lapse, the election staff will create a log that will list all the elections that have lapsed for that year and they will check the log before accepting any write-in declarations.

4. *The reviewer recommended the election staff utilize numbered seals and seal logs to secure ballots and document access to the ballots.*

The election staff immediately (prior to the election) changed their procedures and included numbered seals and logs on their ballot deposit box in the election office and the cage they use to store ballots.

5. *The reviewer recommended that the Skagit County Elections Department display all of the required elements in their office just as they would a polling place.*

For all future elections, the Skagit County Elections Department will display all of the required elements. They also provided the reviewer with an updated written procedure for the Auditor's Office functioning as a polling place.

6. *The reviewer recommended the Skagit County Canvassing Board should have a written authorization for the Auditor's staff and other temporary employees to process ballots.*

The Skagit County Elections Department provided the reviewer with a written authorization for processing ballots signed by the Canvassing Board. It was adopted by the Board on January 5, 2006.

7. *The reviewer recommended all ballots that they cannot count, i.e., ballots post-marked too late, ballots missing signatures, etc., be referred to the County Canvassing Board.*

The Skagit County Canvassing Board revised their procedure and provided a copy to the reviewer. The procedure documents instances when the Elections Department will refer ballots with a recommendation that they not be counted. Some of the ballots will be presented to the Board individually for their determination and some will be in a batch report. They also adopted a procedure outlining when ballots should be rejected.

8. *The reviewer recommended that the Elections staff must, as soon as possible after the election, examine the write-in votes for each office and determine which races, if any, have to be tallied.*

The Skagit County Elections Department has revised their procedures accordingly.

9. *The reviewer recommended the Skagit County Elections Department make every effort to ensure the election results are sent to the Office of the Secretary of State in a timely manner. This includes an accurate Reconciliation Report.*

The Skagit County Elections Department has revised their procedures accordingly.

I commend the Elections Department for their obvious dedication to the election process and their desire to improve an already excellent operation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 360.902.4159 or tbuckles@secstate.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy Buckles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tracy" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Buckles".

Tracy Buckles
Program Specialist
Election Certification and Training Program